

MAPS for Genealogists – Part One

Why use maps? Maps provide clues to help us understand where our ancestors may have lived and how the physical surroundings affected their lives. Maps help us to know where to look for written records about them. For instance, the *Map Guide to the U.S. Federal Censuses 1790 – 1920* will show what county your ancestor lived in at the time each census was taken, and this may be a different county than what a current map shows. An early commercial atlas is good for showing railroads and their branch lines plus little railroad towns that may have disappeared. Atlases such as *Historical Atlas of Arizona* or *Atlas of American History* could be used to see where the trails and canals were. This information will help you understand how your ancestors traveled from place to place. By following the migration route of your ancestors on a map you would know where to look for records for births, marriages and deaths.

Topographic maps will help you to see the land contours for each location where your ancestors lived. For instance, if one of your family stories talks about a flood, with a topographic map you could see where the flood may have occurred. With topographic maps roads, streams, railroads, and named townships can be found. The older Arizona topographical maps, which cover 1880-1940, show the location of ranches, roads, railroads, and cemeteries. Arizona does not have named townships, only districts and municipalities. If you need to know the township in which your ancestor lived in another state you can use the *Township Atlas of the United States*.

The general collection at the Arizona State Library, Archives and Public Records contains books and material with maps for the U.S. West and over 350 gazetteers. The *Pioneer Atlas of the American West* by Rand McNally and Company is a facsimile reproduction of the maps and indexes from the 1876 edition and contains contemporary railroad maps. Another example is *Encyclopedia of Western Railroad History: the Desert States, Arizona, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah* by Donald B. Robertson.

The Map Collection in Arizona State Library, Archives and Public Records contains 80,000 maps, 26,000 of these maps cover the history of Arizona. The topographical map collection for the American Southwest is extensive and contains topographical maps for the rest of the United States. The Collection contains a complete set of the DeLorme Atlases. They are topographical maps showing roads, trails and display gazetteer information.

Call 602-926-3878 (1-800-228-4710 for Arizona only) before visiting the Map Collection to get the open hours. The Arizona State Library, Archives and Public Records is located 1700 W. Washington, Phoenix, Arizona 85007

Pat II – Using the Internet to Find Maps

MAPS for Genealogists – Part Two

The Internet is a great resource for finding maps vital for serious genealogical research. Online maps provide visual clues to help you locate where your ancestors lived and where to look for written records about them. The first article explored printed maps while this article expands that exploration to digital maps.

A Yahoo.com search for maps will provide many sites for maps, such as the National Geographic site and the Perry-Castaneda Library Map Collection (University of Texas--Austin). Another extensive source for maps online is the United States Digital Map Library, a USGenWeb Project, which provides county, state, U.S. and Indian Land Treaty maps.

The Digital Sanborn Map collection represents a subscription service. People with a library card for a public library in Arizona can access the Sanborn Maps through their public library's website. The Sanborn maps chart the growth and development of towns in Arizona during the period 1886 -- 1958. Sanborn maps are not available for all towns in each year. Because these maps were created to assist fire insurance companies, they provide building details. For example, if your ancestor worked in a bakery at First Avenue and Glendale Avenue in May 1924 in Glendale, you can find the bakery's location. Additional information about the structure shows that ovens were attached at the back of the building, and the bakery itself was connected to a restaurant and confectionary shop.

The official repository of domestic geographic names information for the United States is the *Geographic Names Information System (GNIS)*. This system contains information for almost 2 million physical and cultural geographic features for the United States and its territories. For instance, you could search for a cemetery in Arizona or other states and find its location including the state, county, latitude, longitude, map name, and a map.

The *ASU Libraries Place Name Sites*, is a great place to start searching for United States and world maps. The *U.S. Gazetteer* lists place names that are included in the 1990 U. S. Census. Besides indicating the place name, the U.S. Gazetteer provides the population, location, zip code, and a map of the area. The *GEOnet Names Server* contains place names for over 3.3 million features throughout the world. The JewishGen *ShtetlSeeker* is a searchable database that provides information on the location of populated places in Eastern Europe, many of which no longer exist.

Another major source is *Getty's Online Thesaurus of Geographic Names (TGN)*. The TGN is a structured, world-coverage resource of 1.3 million names, including vernacular

and historic names, coordinates, locations and descriptive notes focusing on places for the study of art and architecture.

The *Columbia Gazetteer of North America*, with 50,000 entries for North America, covers every incorporated place and county in the United States, along with several thousand unincorporated places, special-purpose sites, and physical features.

For more information about map print or online resources contact the Map Collection, 602-542-4343 (1-800-228-4710 for Arizona only) or the Genealogy Collection, 602-542-3942, at the Arizona State Library, Archives and Public Records, 1700 W. Washington, Phoenix, AZ 85007.

Database URLs:

ASU Libraries: Place Name Site

<http://www.asu.edu/lib/hayden/govdocs/maps/geogname.htm>

Columbia Gazetteer of North America <http://www.bartleby.com/69>

Geographic Names Information System (GNIS) <http://geonames.usgs.gov>

GEOnet Names Server <http://earth-info.nga.mil/gns/html/index.html>

Getty's Online Thesaurus of Geographic Names (TGN),

http://www.getty.edu/research/conducting_research/vocabularies/tgn

National Geographic maps <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/maps>

Perry-Castaneda Library Map Collection, University of Texas at Austin

<http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps>

ShtetlSeeker <http://www.jewishgen.org/ShtetlSeeker/LocTown.asp>

United States Digital Map Library, USGenWeb Project,

<http://www.rootsweb.com/~usgenweb/maps>

U.S. Gazetteer <http://www.census.gov/geo/www/gazetteer/gazette.html>